

No. 168 June 1989

Hillandale

NEWS



**A
Hot
Performer**

I BEGAN WITH A SELECTION OF TRACKS FROM THUMPER 'BANJO' LUMBERJACK'S LOW BUDGET LIVE ALBUM MADE IN VARIOUS CLUBS AROUND THE Gobi THE SPEAKERS WERE RUTHLESSLY REVEALING BUT EVEN SO THUMPER'S SLAPS ON THE BANJO BODY DIDN'T LEAP AT THE LISTENER BUT WERE PRESENTED AT A DISCREET LEVEL RELATIVE TO THE REST OF HIS PLAYING VOCALS WERE INTELLIGIBLE AND SUITABLY INTIMATE AND THUMPER'S MAGIC SHONE THROUGH THIS WAS PROBABLY SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE FERROFLUID DAMPING GIVING TRACKS LIKE 'I WISH I COULD GET IT IN THE HOLE' MORE PROMINENCE DIVERTING MY ATTENTION FROM THE SONGS MELODIC FLOW AND DISPROPORTIONATELY INCREASING MY AWARENESS OF ITS RHYTHMIC FOUNDATIONS TONALLY AND DYNAMICALLY ON LOUDER TRACKS THEY DELIVERED A CONSTANTLY ATTENTION GRABBING SOUND WITHOUT LISTENING FATIGUE AND SO TO THE BASS THE FIRST THING I NOTICED WAS



KEF

IN A WORD, LOUDSPEAKERS

The HILLANDALE News

The Official Journal of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society

Founded in 1919

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WHEN THEY TOLD ME WE HAD TO CANCEL the Oxford '89 Symposium through lack of support I thought I had misheard. The initial response had been brisk, I believe, and with the attractions on offer, the anniversary aspect of the event seemed almost incidental. I expected a full house. Unhappily, by the end of April fewer than 40 tickets had been taken up and, faced with a thumping loss of the Society's money (well, YOUR money, actually) the organisers were bound to call the whole thing off. This is sad. Sad, not just for Ken Loughland and George Frow, who had worked hard on the symposium's conception and organisation. Sad, not just for the four distinguished speakers who had paid us the considerable compliment of giving their high-cost talents and time for nothing, and who have now been told "not today, thank you". Sad, not just for the 30-odd members who DID want to attend, and who have had their money sent back to them. But sad, in my opinion, for the Society as a whole, for passing up a unique opportunity.

And yet . . . The Society consists of its members, and its members have voted overwhelmingly that they do not want this sort of event. Who am I to tell them they are wrong? And so I fall to wondering; if you don't want this sort of event, what DO you want in return for your annual subscription? Merely six copies of this magazine? If so, that is most flattering to me, the Editor. But surely this Society, which all began with a bunch of phono enthusiasts getting together in a London pub seventy years ago, and which now extends to some 800 members across 26 different countries around the world; surely, I say, this Society means more than just a magazine, doesn't it? If so, what more? Write and tell me. Then maybe we can find a way of giving you what YOU want when the big anniversary comes along in five years' time.

T. C.

Lighter Sides

by Peter Cliffe

No.2 REGINALD KING

RECENTLY PERUSING MY COPY of the Radio Times for 5th September 1930, I was struck by the amount of light orchestral music broadcast in the course of a single week, quite apart from pianoforte or organ solos and the remarkably varied programmes of military bands. Such concerts were normal fare until the close of the Second World War, after which their popularity declined. By the mid-fifties, lilting, tuneless light music had become almost (but not quite) extinct. To date no resurgence of interest is discernible, public preference clinging to electronic synthesisation, the more strident the better. This says little for present-day tastes, and ensures that a wealth of lovely music is becoming as forgotten as the minuet.

Among the orchestras heard over the National Programme and the London and Midland Regional Programmes that week in 1930 were the Gershom Parkington Quintet; the somewhat clumsily-named National Orchestra of Wales Light Orchestra, conducted by Warwick Braithwaite; the Midland Wireless Orchestra, conducted by Frank Cantell; the Prince of Wales Playhouse (Lewisham) Orchestra, conducted by Frank Westfield; the BBC Orchestra, conducted by Charles Ancliffe and playing his own compositions; the Victor Olof Sextet (with Joseph Farington, bass); and Reginald King and his Orchestra.

Many of these made records: Gershom Parkington for Broadcast, Decca and Metropole; Westfield for Parlophone; Ancliffe for Broadcast and Columbia; Victor Olof for Decca; and Reginald King for HMV, Regal, Regal-Zonophone, and Columbia. I have the pleasure to be acquainted with Reginald King and his

wife Rebé, now living in retirement in Yorkshire. In my view he is one of the most talented light music composers this country has produced.

Reginald Claude McMahon King, LRAM, ARAM, was born in Hampstead on 5th October 1904, and began to write piano pieces when he was seven. At the Royal Academy of Music he won scholarships for both piano and composition. In 1936 he was elected an Associate. His early career was devoted to 'serious' music, and he appeared as a concert pianist at Sir Henry Wood's Promenade Concerts. He composed a Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra which was broadcast internationally; a Pianoforte Sonata; a Violin and Pianoforte Sonata; and two books of Preludes. Highly regarded though such works undoubtedly were, he turned eventually to light orchestral

composition. Unlike his friend Eric Coates, however, he wrote only a few suites, but a wealth of pleasant individual pieces possessing the grace and intimacy of chamber music. Sadly, only a few of his works were recorded. In due course he formed his own light orchestra, making his maiden broadcast from Savoy Hill in 1929. He subsequently made hundreds of broadcasts, becoming very well known indeed. In 1954 the BBC celebrated his 25th broadcasting anniversary with a programme introduced by Stuart Hibberd. I heard a tape of this while at

the Kings' home some years ago. For many years Reginald King's Orchestra had a faithful following at Bridlington. I have seen his Programme for Friday 30th August 1957. It consisted of two concerts, one in the morning, the other in the evening, featuring music by Lionel Monckton, Wynford Reynolds, Herman Finck, Noël Coward, Albert W. Ketèlby, and Richard Rodgers.

Reginald King's recorded output seems to have been modest compared to that of



de Groot or J.H. Squire, and such records do not surface very often. When they do they typify the taste, charm and delicacy of pre-war light music at its best.

The film "Rio Rita", co-starring Bebe Daniels and John Boles, had songs by Joe McCarthy and Harry Tierney, the team which had created "Irene" in 1919. Reginald King and his Orchestra recorded "You're Always in my Heart" from "Rio Rita", probably in December 1929. It was issued in 1930 to coincide with the UK release of the movie, and appeared on HMV B.3286. Certainly, in December 1929 King recorded Rudolf Friml's "Chanson", which had begun as the fox-trot "Chansonette" back in 1923 and would be transformed into "The Donkey Serenade" in 1937. It was paired (on HMV B.3481) with Philip Braham's "Dark Red Roses" recorded in May 1930.

Reginald King's own melody "If You But Knew" and Percy E. Fletcher's "My Love to You" appeared on HMV B.3408 in 1930, as did a selection from the Fox film "Song o' my Heart" on HMV C.1919, recorded in May of that year. The film starred John McCormack, who captivated audiences with his singing but whose acting capabilities were minimal. His leading lady was Maureen O'Sullivan, soon to become Tarzan's "Jane".

Whether Reginald King ever recorded George E. Springer and Harry Barris's fox-trot hit of 1931, "Guilty" I am unable to say, but his photograph prominently adorns the sheet music cover of Feldman's British edition. He did record music of this kind, using his own arrangements, for in June 1932 he waxed Gordon Clifford and Nacio Herb Brown's "Paradise" (banned from the U.S. airwaves as "suggestive") and "Auf Wiedersehen, My Dear", a hit which required the combined efforts of Al Hoffman, Al Goodhart, Ed Nelson, and Milton Ager, on Regal MR 603.

King's lovely melody "Song of Paradise" became his signature tune, and several excellent recordings were made. The Celebrity Trio did one for Regal-Zonophone, the musicians being Reginald King himself on piano, Douglas Cameron on 'cello, and the distinguished violinist Alfredo Campoli (to whom the tune was

dedicated) who recorded it with his Salon Orchestra in 1934 (Decca F.3996). In 1935 Marek Weber (then in London and eventually to settle in America) recorded it on HMV B.8447. Two particularly interesting sides were waxed in September 1934 (for Columbia DB.1480). "Daybreak" and "Melody at Dusk", both King compositions, were recorded by a trio consisting of Albert Sandler (violin), Reginald Kilby ('cello), and Reginald King (piano). Not only are they delightful recordings in every way, but there is a spoken introduction to each performance by Albert Sandler.

Harry Tierney's "Alice Blue Gown" was recorded by Reginald King and his Orchestra in October 1934, backed (on Regal-Zonophone MR.1692) by Herman Darewski's "If You Could Care".

Reginald King's concert overture "The Immortals" occupied two sides of Columbia DX.904 issued in 1939. Performed by the London Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Walter Goehr, it was a light and happy work which was favourably received. The Era liked "his perky rhythms and his rich orchestration", while the Kentish Observer regarded the work as "melody served in a light-hearted manner".

Among Reginald King's lovely compositions was "June Night on Marlow Reach", from his suite "In the Chilterns". It has never been recorded but he once played it to me, his style at the piano as graceful and assured as that of a man half his age - he was then in his early eighties.

"I retired from the profession some years ago," Reginald King wrote to me in January 1981, "and perhaps prematurely, but at the time I was aware of the marked decline in the output of light music both by the BBC and music publishers."

Sadly there seems little prospect of change in the foreseeable future, but at least those of us who derive pleasure from the pursuit of increasingly scarce old records can continue to hear beautiful music such as that by Reginald King, from what now seems like a bygone age.

Columbia Prefixes

by David Ian McCallum
President, Phonograph Society of N.S.W., Australia

I HAVE GREATLY ENJOYED reading through back-issues of the "Hillandale News" over the last few days, and this has prompted me to send you the following. Although a fair amount of correspondence has already been published, including that from the redoubtable Mr. Frank Andrews, I offer some further comments and an Australian anecdote. In Hillandale No.142 (March 1985) Peter Adamson succinctly shows the national blocks of double-sided Columbia-EMI records, implied as:

	<u>Light Blue</u>		<u>Dark Blue</u>	
	<u>12"</u>	<u>10"</u>	<u>12"</u>	<u>10"</u>
Great Britain	LX	LB	DX	DB
(or)	LBX(?)	LBB(?)	DBX	DBB(?)
Australia	LOX	LO	DOX	DO
France	LFX	LF	DFX	DF
Germany	LWX	LW	DWX	DW
Italy	LCX	LC	DCX	DC
South Africa	LSAX	LSA	DSAX	DSA

etc . . .

Writing as a collector who has had the opportunity to examine and collect records in many parts of the world, I have seen that the Hayes factory was responsible for export pressings in many of the above number blocks at different times, either to augment or supplant local production. Thus LCX/LFX records pressed at Hayes, mainly for distribution in Italy/France or via the "International List" are quite common.

Especially at the beginning of a series it is not inconceivable that the "expatriate" market has not got out-of-step with the "parent" British issue, i.e., no local releases have yet become interspersed: thus in Mr. Adamson's example, DB10 = DBX 10.

The United Kingdom has, in two areas at least, not made a practice of plainly identifying itself as a country of origin: on postage stamps and, in the case of British-sourced ("English language") G&T/HMV single-sided record numbers, where the "English language/origin" digit is simply omitted. This form of "inverted snobbery" (no offence intended) may have, and in fact seems to have persisted in the Columbia blocks under discussion. Let us now suppose that the 'B' in "DBX"

does not indicate "Britain" at all: it may stand for Belgium, Borneo or Bulgaria! I do not know what (if any) indicator was used for Belgium - a likely contender - but could not DX10 be for the British market and DBX10 for the export market?

On a different subject I often see misprinted the Australian prefix 'O' as '0' (zero), which predates the above series. These are the original Columbia (as apart from Columbia-EMI) prefixes, and 'O' indicates records made at the Homebush plant, Sydney, for distribution in the Oceanic region. They are subdivided into size/label colour/price blocks by the succeeding number group, a confusing system which was fortunately discontinued.

After the 1939-1945 war a peculiar group of Light Blue 12" Australian Columbias appeared numbered LBDX 1 to 12. I spoke to Ron Wills, who had been EMI-Australia's A. & R. manager at the time, and he told me the following story about these Boyd Neel String Orchestra recordings. EMI-Australia had the contract for pressing and distributing British Decca records. "We had only one 12" Decca label category at that time,

the black-label 'Z' series, which were not in the highest price category. These Boyd Neels were originally British 'X' or 'AX' gold-label records, and I wished to market them at their full value. Rather than create a new Decca label, I issued them as full-price light-blue-label Columbias, differentiated as 'LBDX' series (L British Decca X) and allowed the accounts department to settle appropriate payments to Decca."

Moving on to the Columbia Special Cinema Service records, I found the correspondence intriguing. The 12" YBX series all seem to be dubbings from commercial releases, and they suffer in the process. The bass response is attenuated, probably deliberately to enable closer groove spacing. All my copies are badly worn: not surprising when we remember the Western Electric 4A, R.C.A. and B.T.H. cinema reproducers they must have been played with! When new they may have sounded better. On page 190 (Hillandale No.143, April 1985) 'YB 4' should obviously read 'YBX 4'. The 'YBs' are the 10-inch "Stage effects" records, originally issued with yellow labels but later with light-blue, retaining the YB numbers. Some of the 12" series were issued in Australia as YOX 1 - YOX 7, and the "Stage effects" were paralleled (not duplicated) with 10" yellow-label discs FE 1 - FE 12.

On a more serious note, two of the "MGM Shorts" sound track discs of Titta Ruffo have been found in good condition, and they come through very well. I may be able to arrange release of these through the Phonograph Society of N.S.W.'s reissue programme if enough interest is shown. Our Parlophone Historical Series release samples will be taken to the Monte-Carlo trade symposium for wholesaling early in 1989. Volume 1 contains (in numerical order) as many as will fit on our L.P. (Anselmi, Lehmann, Didur, d'Andrade, etc.) After these I have in mind to do perhaps the Victor Heritage Series, the HMV Archive Series, and others, dependant on good originals being obtained. Plunkett-Greene, including his lecture, "Interpretation in Song", is another contender.

Wishing you all success with your fine magazine, I hope this encourages correspondence from other members.

The Monophone

by George Taylor

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING completely different. You have heard of the Bettini and Mapleson cylinders; what about the Leonardo cylinders? Such was the title of a programme on Radio 3 on April 2nd. The programme was presented by Professor Sydney Anglo, formerly of University College, Swansea. He claimed that Leonardo da Vinci had made a phonograph, which the inventor called an "echo meccanica", about 1510, and that, miraculously, a cache of wax cylinder recordings by Leonardo had recently turned up. Some detail of the design of the echo meccanica was given, and its performance was favourably compared with that of Edison's phonograph of 1878.

Some of the cylinders were played; they were all speech records, by da Vinci himself and others. Highlights were a record of Michelangelo tearing a strip off da Vinci concerning the latter's artistic opinions, and a recording by a model for the Mona Lisa explaining how her enigmatic smile was a result of partial paralysis from getting a chill! Professor Anglo called on a medical historian of Scottish descent to give a modern diagnosis of Mona Lisa's problem, and another expert called upon was a female professor of acoustics in an Italian university: the accents were hilarious. The scholarship was impeccable, the whole performance delightful, and it is almost a pity that, at the end, the announcer had to admit that the whole effort was a hoax. By the way, the programme was first broadcast in January, in connection with an exhibition in London concerning Leonardo's scientific endeavours, so it is unlikely to be repeated again.



THE ZONOPHONE RECORD

AND ITS ASSOCIATED LABELS IN BRITAIN

Part 3

by Frank Andrews

The 'Stencilled' Records

IN APRIL 1913 THE eleven-month-old "British Gramophone & Dealers Association" met in London. Two items from its proceedings are worth reporting. The first; its approval of J.E. Hough Ltd.'s strong stand for price maintenance with regard to its several makes of record. The second item was more important: it concerned the inroads being made into the normal trading of standard-priced records by the growing menace of "stencil records". Stencil records were records offered to the public pressed from masters already used (or still in use) for full-priced discs, but selling more cheaply with different labels or "stencils". Two such, since the summer of 1912, had been the Coliseum and Scala records pressed from Beka Grand Record masters or associated labels in Europe. The members of the Association were quite certain there was going to be a flood of similar discs hitting the market in the coming 1913/14 season. It was feared that 10" double-sided records would cost as little as 7½d each to the dealers, a number of whom would have records pressed with their own label. They forecast that records would be selling for as little as 1s.0d each. With some businesses already contracted to take lots of 5,000 discs for delivery by October 1913, it was the Association's considered opinion that such low prices would destroy the industry's trading in its present form, to the detriment of its dealer members' interests.

The Cinch Record

It was in October 1913 that "CINCH" was registered as a trade mark for the British Zonophone Co. Ltd. covering gramophone records, the application having been made the previous April. The British dealer's association witnessed its fears come true when at the beginning of the new season, in September, several cheap records with unfamiliar labels were put on the market. Among them was the Cinch Record; 10" double-sided, priced at 1s.1d each.

The first Cinch discs bore a mustard-yellow label printed in green and had 78 discs in its introductory catalogue, numbered in a 5,000 catalogue series. They included titles pressed from earlier single-sided Zonophone Records, some from the early Twins, and some from previously recorded but unpublished repertoire. The later issues had dull cream labels printed in green.

Which company instigated the very cheap record remains unknown, but all the leading firms in the trade were aware that a cheap record was to be launched, and all participated except for J.E. Hough Ltd. (Edison Bell). The Columbia Graphophone Company introduced its Phoenix discs at the same price as the Cinch, also using old matrices and unpublished material as new recordings, disguising the origins with substitute matrix numbers. There were at least seven other competitive labels in the cheap records market that season, such as Arrow Record, The 'Bob' Record, Kalliope, Lyceum Record, Pelican Record, Popular Record, and The Stars' Record. The Cinch Record bore no manufacturer's name, nor was it advertised in the trade periodicals, but the 'X' single-face numbers on the labels, and in the surrounds with the matrix numbers, revealed quite clearly that they were Zonophone Records in disguise.

The Demise of the Zonophone Grand Opera Label Enter Zonophone Celebrity Record

August 1913 witnessed the termination of the Zonophone Grand Opera Record, with its white and green labels, for September found them coupled under a new label styled ZONOPHONE CELEBRITY RECORD with 28 of the former 29 sides in the "Opera" series coupled as GO.1 to GO.14. The odd side, one of L'Incognita's, was deleted. The "CELEBRITY" records were given red labels printed in gold. They did not bear the TWIN trade mark but had a quite small version of the Zonophone

circle and cross trade mark placed centrally above the spindle hole. They were priced at 3s.6d each.

At 1s.1d each the Cinch Records were an instantaneous success, the first catalogue being supplemented by monthly issues, many of them with fresh recordings. All the cheap makes appear to have sold well.

The Gramophone and Columbia companies must have been compelled by market conditions to enter the cheap records market, firstly to undercut those with discs at 1s.6d each and then simply to compete in a market which by February 1914 had over 50 varieties of label selling at that price or less. If it was The Gramophone Company who planned the cheap disc in the first place then it must have been an ill-kept secret, for at least nine labels opened the new season at 1s.0d or 1s.1d each

In Germany the Gramophone Company, through its control of Deutsche Grammophon and the International Zonophone Company, upset the retail trade by introducing the Zonophon "Lila" Record at an equally low price. The Cinch Record had been in the first stages of production as early as June 1913.

As a direct result of the appearance of the cheap records the "tally man" methods of selling records went out of business. They had been operating on the basis of inducing clients to contract a purchase of 50 or so discs over a period of a year at 2s.6d per disc. Upon signing, the client was given a gramophone which became his own property upon completion of the contract. Clients of this kind were customers lost to manufacturers such as The Gramophone Company and Columbia. "Tally Man" record companies usually had their own labels, pressed with recordings from other manufacturers' matrix stocks. Such were John Bull Record, Albion Record, National Double-Sided Records, and perhaps The Leader Record and Burlington Record.

Opposition to the Cinch Record

At the British Dealers' Association meeting of 30th September, its secretary, Henry Seymour, said they all knew how

the cheap records were made; with obsolete matrices of passably good recordings being brought into use again, supplemented by a few up-to-date titles, saving an enormous amount in recording costs. The materials in which the records were pressed suffered from adulteration, reducing their durability. Resin, pitch, and glue were in the ascendency while shellac was seeking pastures new. In the cheap records business "material" was everything. By 10th September 320,000 Cinch records had been sold.

The *Talking Machine News* wrote: "If this move is intended to create a monopoly (which company were they referring to?) by killing off other firms opposing, and should the policy of price cutting reach its ultimate and starve out the firms not endowed with capitalistic reserves, the sales of the record at a loss will, naturally, be stopped by the conquerors, and prices will then go up. Then will come the chance of the smaller firms and the whole process will be repeated."

Of course, dealers were obliged to sell about twice as many cheap records to maintain the same level of profitability, and were in a quandary over whether or not to stock them. If they chose not to, they risked losing customers!

The *Phono Record* appreciated one favourable aspect. It argued that the public's ability to buy at such cheap prices might lead to larger numbers of people buying gramophones; they might eventually turn to the higher-priced and better class of record. Except for that, this periodical sided with every other trade paper in deprecating the cheap record.

Support for the Cheap Records

Beginning with the October 1913 releases, American-recorded artists began to appear again in the Zonophone supplements, taken from the Victor Talking Machine Company's own masters. One American master was used for a Cinch side (5017). It was given as "Fluffy Waffles" by the Royal Guards Band, but it was in fact by the

Zonophone Orchestra, the house band of the defunct Universal Talking Machine Company. With its December 1913 supplement 139 different Cinch Records had been issued.

A correspondent to the **Talking Machine News** wrote: "There is a great need for a cheap record, inasmuch as the big majority, the working class, has never been catered for. The Society Record Kings ignored the fact. What is the result? The wide-awake Germans, and some English newcomers too, have recognised the necessity, filled the gap, and are today reaping the benefit of their enterprise. Millions are blessing them. The said "Kings" have had to toe the line with the newcomers and have actually marketed a cheap record. One can scarcely respect a motive the purpose of which is not so much to meet demand but to choke, if possible, the inception of the cheap record, control the field, and once more fall back on the laurels of high prices. If there is no merit in the new records, why worry about them? Pass them by and deal only in records made high in price by big cigars, fur-lined coats, motor cars, dinners, presents to costly artists and princely salaries, etcetera. It is rather late in the day to think that manufacturers are foolish enough to put inferior good into the market. One thing is certain, and that is that the territory of the talker will be vastly increased by the cheaper records, a thing greatly to

be desired, and the masses educated." In spite of such support, the depreciation of the cheap records was continued in the columns of the trade journals during the first six months of 1914.

It is known that in March 1914 Mr. Dixon of The Gramophone Company was asking that the Cinch Records be priced at 1s.6d each as from July 1st. It was decided to keep the price at 1s.1d, probably because of an increasing demand which required additional facilities. Meanwhile the Managing Director of The Gramophone Company agreed to investigate the question of a price increase. The result of the investigation was made known in May 1914. The Cinch Records remained with their current price, but it was decided to reduce the price of the Zonophone Record-The Twin from 2s.6d to 1s.6d each, excepting those recordings by Harry Lauder; but that reduction was not authorised until November 1914, and even then was not put into effect until the autumn of 1915.

From May 1911, when the Twin and Zonophone labels had been combined, there had been a number of special supplements, besides the monthly lists and the Jewish issues already mentioned. They comprised the following: Billy Williams recordings in June and November 1911, March and June 1912, and October 1913; Tyneside dialect artists in November 1911 and January 1912; Scottish supplements in December 1911, June 1912 and October 1913; a Welsh list in October 1913; eight discs of Ragtime in January 1913; and ten discs of "Jolly Jingles" in March 1912. Two special issues had been Harry Tate, with his motoring sketch, and Stanley Kirkby with a disc commemorating both the sinking of the R.M.S. Titanic and the fatal outcome of Captain Scott's journey to the South Pole.

Zonophone Record-The Twins as Ariel Grand Records

In March 1914 J.G. Graves Ltd. of Sheffield, the well-known mail-order and credit house, which advertised widely, placed an order for a quarter of a million Ariel Grand Records to be pressed by The Gramophone Company from British Zonophone Company matrices. Delivery was wanted by September for the onset



of the new 1914-1915 season. Ariel Grand Records had been, or were still being, pressed from Beka Grand and Favorite masters of Carl Lindstrom (London) Ltd.; from Jumbo Record masters of Fonotipia Ltd.; from Polyphon Record masters of Polyphonwerke A.G.; and from Gramavox Records of The Sound Recording Company Ltd.

With war declared in August 1914 and with its supplies from Germany halted, John G. Graves had to rely more than ever on pressings from British Zonophone and The Sound Recording Company. Some time later Ariel Grand Records began to come from the Edison Bell works of J.E. Hough Ltd.'s Winner Record Company Ltd. In the postwar years other Ariels were pressed by the Hertford Record Co. Ltd. and then the Parlophone Co. Ltd., eventually the last company to press Ariels. John Graves, the founder of the label, personally listened to hundreds of the Zonophone discs in order to choose titles and/or artists for his business. This he continued to do at least until the close of the 1927-1928 season.

Ariel Grand Records were mostly coupled differently from the Zonophone issues, and had catalogue numbers devised by Graves Ltd. The 'X' prefix of the face numbers was omitted from the Ariels. As deliveries against each large order placed by Graves were depleted by sales, Graves would order another large quantity. Over a period some Zonophone sides would be ordered again and again, and were often given new Ariel catalogue numbers. Thus Zonophone recordings, with the same matrix number, can be found on differently numbered Ariel Grand Records. The artists' credits on Ariels also took various forms with different batches ordered. Some had the Zonophone artists' credits, some had pseudonyms, and some were anonymous. Similar procedures were adopted with Ariels supplied by The Sound Recording Company.

The British Zonophone Company Ltd. in the First World War

With war declared, all the record companies in Britain (including the German owned Lindstrom Group) immediately responded with patriotic and public-spirited policies. The British Zonophone

Co. in September issued a special 6-page leaflet with selections of patriotic titles drawn from its Cinch and Zonophone catalogues. The next patriotic supplement was for Zonophone-Twin records, published in October. It contained ten specially recorded titles performed by some of Zonophone's star artists, plus two previously recorded sides, appropriately printed in red and blue on white paper. The cover was decorated with the crossed flags of the Royal Standard and the Union Jack.

On October 21st "The Black Diamonds Band" (a cover name for a number of bands but in this instance the 'house band' for the Zonophone label)* under its most used conductor at that period, Eli Hudson, gave a rare public performance concert at the London Coliseum (it being Trafalgar Day) the proceeds of which went to the aid of Queen Mary's Nursing Guild.

The next patriotic supplement was a list of Cinch Records published in November 1914; it had twelve discs. Another in December, of eight discs, proved to be the last. All twenty were new recordings; in fact Cinch Records were then being released almost entirely with new recordings. The complete list of patriotic titles as at January 1915 comprised sixty-six sides, including older recordings. The third and final patriotic Zonophone supplement, containing 28 newly recorded items, was issued in January 1915. The leaflet was similar to the previous one. Additional patriotic titles and other repertoire relating to the war were included on the supplements which continued to be issued throughout the war.

Since the incorporation of the Zonophone Grand Opera Records into the new Zonophone Celebrity Record series, in September 1913, with numbers GO.1 to GO.13, there had been no fresh additions to those red-labelled discs until December 1914, when GO.14 appeared on the monthly list. The 12" Zonophone Record-The Twin had then reached serial

*The "house band" which recorded was also issued as The Peerless Orchestra, and as other named combinations besides that of The Black Diamonds Band.

A.155. The 10" size was at serial 1383. There had been 89 deletions in June 1912 and another 45 in September 1913, although 37 of those had been transferred to the new Cinch Records.

Zonophone Discs Reduced in Price

With the opening of the new 1915-1916 season, the proposed reduction in price of the 10" Zonophone discs was put into effect, dropping from 2s.6d each to 1s.6d each. The 12" discs were reduced from 4s.0d to 2s.6d each and the Zonophone Celebrity Records (10") were down to 2s.6d from 3s.6d. The Harry Lauder records were an exception: his green-label Zonophones were promoted to the red label, and so retained their price at 2s.6d. They also retained their standard serial numbers and were not given 'GO' prefixed numbers. The same policy was adopted for the disc of a speech by the founder of the Boy Scouts movement, Lord Baden Powell, serial 1241, issued in March 1914.

William Manson, the manager, announced the reductions declaring they were to cost the British Zonophone Company a reduction in income of £15,000 per annum. The 10" Zonophones being priced at 1s.6d were brought into competition with American-owned Columbia's London branch, which had been selling its Regal records at that price since their introduction in February 1914.

The **Phono' Record**, referring to the latest price reductions, was still highly critical of the cheap records policy. The editor reiterated that no trade move had been more heartily damned both by factors and dealers than the arrival of the Cinch, Phoenix, and other makes of record, at absurdly low prices. He held that the manufacturers had "lost sight of their true perspectives" but then claimed that "the perspectives of their real business interests had begun to assert themselves. As to the fate of the cheap records, the sooner the better!" The advent of the present war, he continued, had "prevented another cold douche to the trade which had already been prepared with large stocks of records accumulated in readiness for another instantaneous response from factors and dealers. But the gods of war had

stepped in and, for once, 'the best laid schemes of mice and men had gone agley'."

The Passing of the "Cinch" Record

In November 1915 the manager of the London Office of America's Talking Machine World told his headquarters that cheap records in Great Britain were on the point of disappearing and, as far as the Cinch Records were concerned, he was correct. The final supplement came out in January 1916 and all were withdrawn by the British Zonophone Company in July 1916. The label was abandoned. There are Cinch Records in collectors' hands which have been overstock with a PEERLESS RECORD label, so it would appear that the abandoned stocks of Cinch Records were sold off to a concessionaire to be disposed of cheaply. A total of 456 different Cinches were issued. There had been no special supplements for either the Zonophone or the Cinch issues during the whole of 1915. There had been one special issue in mid-August with Robert Radford singing the "Munition War Worker's Song", with Arthur Pryor's "The Victor" march on the reverse, serial 1562. A new feature had been only one list covering April and May.

Since the onset of the war all Zonophone and Cinch records had been pressed at Hayes, Middlesex, whereas before hostilities began many had been pressed in Germany. For the new season of 1916-1917 it was reported that The British Zonophone Co. was to have its own recording studio at the Hayes factory of The Gramophone Company, where its recording sessions would be arranged independently of those for the "His Master's Voice" labels. If such ensued then it made no difference to the matrix numbering series used by The Gramophone Company since May 1915, where 'y' was the prefix for the 10" and 'z' that for the 12" Zonophones.

The Suspension of the Monthly Supplements

With production problems deriving from war conditions, The Gramophone Company found it impossible to meet the demand for the Zonophone records on the

February 1917 list. As a consequence the March issues were delayed and listed as a March/April supplement, but only with 15 discs, the usual number for a single month's issues. What was thought to be a measure of convenience in fact heralded the irregular publication of supplements which was to persist into the immediate postwar years.

With the start of the 1917-1918 season the combined September/October 1917 list showed all three categories of Zonophones with price increases of 6d, so the standard 10" size was at 2s.0d each with the others at 3s.0d each. The six 12" discs on that list proved to be the last of any new issues for the next 14 months, the highest at A.242. The 1918-1919 season opened with the announcement of another price increase from 15th September 1918. The 10" went to 2s.6d each, the 12" to 4s.0d each, and the Zonophone Celebrity Records to 3s.6d. The armistice was signed on November 11th, bringing hostilities to a halt too late for the December supplement to be able to reflect the end of the war in its repertoires. That supplement had the first of the reintroduced 12" records, A.243.

The Arrival of Jazz and Dance Music

Supplement No.2, with a printer's date of 22nd March 1919, was the first from Zonophone to carry the word "Jazz". It appeared in three titles and again in an artists' credit with "The Manhattan Jazz Band". That was also the first list to credit some titles as "fox-trot", although that dance had been demonstrated on the London stage during the war. More price increases were announced with the No.4 supplement (printer's date 23rd August 1919), which opened the 1919-1920 season. The 10" went to 3s.0d, the 12" to 5s.0d, and the Celebrity records to 4s.0d. Those prices lasted only six months, going up again in February 1920 to become the most expensive in their history. The 10" became 4s.0d, the 12" 6s.6d, and the Celebrities 5s.0d. The Ariel Grand Records were also increased as were other makers' records.

--ooOoo--
To Be Continued
--ooOoo--

A Plucky Venture

The Banjo on Record

WE HAVE RECEIVED a note from Doctor Rainer E. Lotz advising that he will shortly be publishing "The Banjo on Record". This is a discography, with biographies of major banjo players, complemented by essays on the historical development and manufacture of the instrument, performance styles, instrumental techniques, etc. It will contain a listing of all cylinders and 78 rpm disc records (NOT microgrooves) on which the banjo can be heard in a solo role, regardless of the type of music. Dr. Lotz says the book will be a discopaedia, naming all performers anywhere in the world who are known to have recorded during the pre-microgroove era. He is interested in hearing from record and film collectors, musicians, historians, archivists, musicologists, and just about anybody who has information on the banjo and banjoists, in order to check out the typescript. If you wish to help, please contact: Dr. Rainer E. Lotz, Jean Paul Str.6, D5300 Bonn 2, West Germany; or Uli Heier, Réaumurstr.47, 5300 Bonn 1, West Germany. A publisher has been lined up, but the book will not be ready before 1990. Meanwhile, bearing in mind the speculation, in our April edition, on the origins of the word "discography", does anybody want to tell us if this is the first use of the word "discopaedia"?

FUTURE LONDON MEETINGS

June and July on Tuesdays at 7.00.p.m., Bloomsbury Institute, 4th Floor, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Chapel, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W.C.2. August: A SATURDAY MEETING at Neasden Methodist Church Centre, Neasden Lane, London N.W.10, 3.00 to 6.00 p.m.

20th June: DUETS, ENTERTAINERS, AND FRENCHMEN; a cylinder programme by George Frow. 25th July: CHOOSING REISSUES, a talk by Eliot Levin of Symposium Records. 19th August: NIPPER'S UNCLE; William Barraud and gramophone records, presented by Frank Andrews.

ITALIAN OPERA IN WAR AND PEACE

by George Frow

THE LIBERATION OF NAPLES in the autumn of 1943 gave thousands of British and allied servicemen their first experience of Italian opera at the San Carlo Opera House. The Italians had continued to run it under the sponsorship and control of the British military, with a slight American participation. The British writer, Naomi Jacob, with years of peacetime opera listening in Italy, came in as P.R.O. with ENSA.

It was a difficult start at this beautiful opera house during its early days under the Italian managing staff, and according to one who was there at the time, some of the rules in the programme, set out in Italianate English, ruled that:

Ladies is not permitted to hold the
bonnet or keep the hat

It is forbid to enter with stick,
whip, or similar

No drinking or consummation

No stabbing

For nearly all the troops Italian opera was something absolutely new, and many rapidly acquired an appetite that has lasted. The San Carlo team leaders of the day seen and heard were Adriana Guerrini, Luigi Infantino, Paolo Silveri, and Carlo Tagliabue, all of whom will be remembered for their 78s of the 1940s, and the first three featured in a complete post-war Traviata (Columbia DX 1324-38). Gigli and his daughter Rina appeared in Naples on occasion, although I did not see them, and the nearest personal approach I had to a star performance was Traviata, advertised with Toti dal Monte: but a last-moment parting of the curtain told us she had had a road accident, and the baritone, Carlo Tagliabue as Germont senior was promoted to star instead. For these star performances ticket prices were raised slightly, but front stalls were still absurdly cheap.

As the war moved up Italy in 1944 so the opera houses and arenas of Rome, Florence, Genoa and, later, Venice and Verona and many other towns, laid on popular Italian operas for the allied forces. On Italy's liberation in 1945 a casualty from bombing turned out to be La Scala in Milan: this took several years to restore. The last months of 1944 and the beginning of 1945 brought opera and symphonic music to Ancona on the east coast, where a touring company included Lucia Mero, Muzio Giovagnoli (of the Parlophone Lucia on R 20454-66), and a young Tito Gobbi, already well established at 30 and progenitor of a race of new Italian singers for the years after the war.

When peace came, a move southwards to Bari gave regular opportunity to visit the small Teatro Piccini, where the elderly Franco Battaglia was the resident tenor, and visiting singers included Francesco Merli. The opera house was back in business for the locals, and less for the dwindling members of the troops in the area. They would listen to most things, but one could not help feeling sorry for the occasional vocal failing - "The Tenor Who Cracked" as H.M. Bateman might have put it - when the punishment was rough from the gallery. The Piccini introduced the writer to several less familiar operas, such as Andrea Chenier and unusual Donizetti, and performances often went on until after midnight. An interesting production there of "The Barber of Seville" featured as principals two British brothers who would become known in the British opera world: the baritone William Dickie (a Lieutenant-Colonel) and the tenor Murray Dickie, then serving below decks in the Royal Navy.

At the Piccini, quaint translations from the Italian libretto came with every programme, bearing descriptive phrases such as " . . . she bloodied the children . . ." from Trovatore, a nearly incomprehensible story at the best of times. With the Italian language lacking a 'w' (and several other letters) the

local printers who set the type by hand were a resourceful lot, and resorted to an 'm' upside down.

Apart from opera houses, Italian cinemas frequently showed films of Italian opera in their normal weekly or twice-weekly programmes. They were by no means restricted to art cinemas, as they usually are in this country.

When we all came home and were demobbed, the Italian opera companies followed on our heels, and through a combination of Jack Hylton and the Covent Garden Trust, the San Carlo Company put on the seven most popular Italian operas at Covent Garden in October 1946, with additional singers such



as Margherita Carosio, Benvenuto Franci (dal Monte's husband), Mario Binci and Aramis Titta, nephew of Titta Ruffo. The five conductors included Capuana and Patanè. A number of recordings were taken by HMV and Columbia while these artists were in the country. This visiting company toured parts of Britain, and among other places they appeared at the Davis Theatre, Croydon, a cinema demolished long ago.

The New London Opera Company, in conjunction with Jay Pomeroy, then followed on the wave for this new predilection for Italian opera by building a cast around the baritone Mariano Stabile, for opera at London's Cambridge Theatre. Stabile, a singer of long experience, had made the part of Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* his own over the years. Martin Lawrence and Ian Wallace were first noticed in principal

roles in this and other operas there, as well as Margherita Grandi, Murray Dickie, and Lester Ferguson. These productions were well presented, staged, and received, although a great deal of money was lost. A number of excerpts were recorded at the time with Alberto Erede conducting: they are not difficult to find.

A little after, the Rome and Milan companies came over for short seasons at the Stoll Theatre. This had been opened by Oscar Hammerstein as The London Opera House in 1911, but had been a cinema since 1916, and in spite of its size I recall that the orchestra overflowed into the boxes at the side of the stage. Reference to the programmes today for *The Barber*, *Tosca*, *Bohème*, and *Madame Butterfly* shows that apart from Tito Gobbi and the conductor La Rosa Parodi, many of the singers were not of international status or repute, and their names have remained largely unknown outside their country.

From 1943 to 1945 all this had been a minor extended dimension of the war in Italy, and a slight compensation for a long, slow campaign. What had first started in Sicily in the summer of 1943 in primitive conditions at the Bellini Theatre in Catania came to be liked and adopted by all types of servicemen, most of whom had never been out of their own country before, and to whom the British touring companies of Carl Rosa or Moody-Manners meant nothing. After the war many of them took to gathering up opera recordings, and the thread of interest has continued into new generations. Previously this had been the realm of the aesthete, the cognoscente, the patrician, the Mackenzies, Hursts and Hope-Wallaces of the gramophone world. Now one heard the ordinary chap with a few 78s on the shelf and with gossamer thin knowledge of music expounding on the great singers, on portamento, tessitura and rubato. Most of us did it and have grown out of it, but this pursuit of opera of 45 years ago has inspired the appearance of two generations of LPs, with an extension into CD in the last five years. The Italian campaign was a messy business, but on no other front could there have been so many cultural opportunities. They were not wasted.

A Hot Performer

by H. Evans

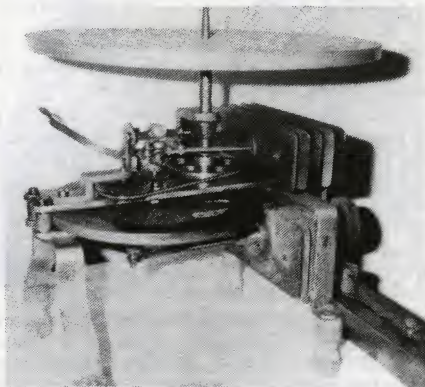
EVER SINCE THE FIRST RECORDING of sound, engineers and inventors have striven to improve the methods used to drive their equipment, ranging from humble hand winding, through water power, treadle, descending weight, spring-driven clockwork, hot air motors, to (currently) electric motor drive. This article takes a look at the hot-air motor, which survived only for a brief four years or so, during which time its main competitor was the spring driven clockwork motor.

An example of a hot air gramophone was first exhibited at the Leipzig Spring Fair in 1910, and several models were marketed up until the outbreak of the First World War, under both the Maestrophone and Apollo names. They did not reappear after the War, one reason being that the motors had been made in Liege, Belgium. The town was badly damaged during hostilities, and presumably the factory did not get going again, but other reasons for the non-reappearance of these gramophones were:

- (a) Cost. The hot air motor alone retailed at five guineas, whereas a clockwork motor could be bought for one eighth of that price.
- (b) Complexity. You needed to be a reasonably competent engineer to operate the machine properly.
- (c) Its incendiary qualities.

The "Hot Air Motor" is in fact a Stirling Cycle Engine, invented and patented by two Scottish brothers in 1816, The Reverend Robert Stirling and James Stirling (Patent No.4081). It is a crankshaft type engine, piston driven, and the ingenious mechanism works on the principle of alternately heating and cooling sections of a mass of air enclosed in the system, using the heating phase to push the piston out and the cooling phase to pull it back. As will be understood from this description, it is a closed-cycle engine, and as no intake or exhaust of air is necessary, the engine is very quiet. In addition to this essential quality for gramophone use, there is no messy condensing steam or dampness present. Also, since the rev-range of the engine is low, it is easy to gear it down to the required turntable speed of 78 rpm. This is done in the Paillard models by means

of spur gears off the crankshaft and a final belt drive to a friction clutch which is mounted on the turntable spindle. This clutch enables the turntable to be stopped in order to change records whilst leaving the engine running. It is operated by lifting a knob on the top of the turntable spindle and twisting it anti-clockwise to lock it in the non-drive position. The turntable is



The clutch operating knob on top of the turntable spindle can be seen, as can the flat section con-rod emerging from the heavily-finned power cylinder

then brought to a stop by hand-braking. At this point, while the clutch is depressed, the governor is not operating, and the motor may begin to accelerate. The rate at which it accelerates is a measure of the excess flame at the burner, and for the economically minded operator in 1910 it possibly enabled him to turn down the burner a notch or two, saving fuel and perhaps also the No Claims Bonus on his Fire Insurance.

The engine is an external combustion engine and the external heat source is a

methyated spirit burner. The design of this burner is the Achilles heel of the Paillard machine, as it is so easy to operate it in an incorrect manner, with potentially disastrous results. The 3/4" wick tube is capped by a removable metal mantle or vapouriser. It is essential to pre-heat this before lighting the burner. However, it is much simpler to dispense with the vapouriser and light the wick directly. This leads with time to a gradually increasing flame, and as it cannot easily be seen once the burner has been placed within the wooden case of the gramophone, it leads to the heat surging out of the small insulated combustion chamber and into the woodwork, with exciting results. It is interesting to note that in all the pictures of the machine the writer has seen, where the burner is discernable, it is being operated in an incorrect manner, i.e., without the vapouriser in place. Perhaps this is why the Paillard machine had such a reputation as a fire hazard. However, if the machine is operated correctly it has many good qualities. It is easy to start: all that is required is to light the burner, place it in position, wait roughly ten seconds, and then spin the flywheel by hand. The motor will then accelerate silently and quietly to its governed speed of 254 rpm, producing a turntable speed of 78 rpm, at which it has adequate power to drive 20" Pathé discs if required, though not all models of the Paillard machine would accept such discs.

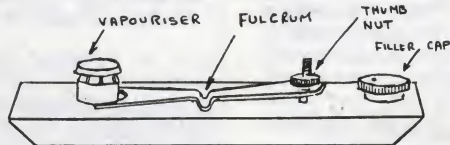
The motor is a two cylinder type, but only one cylinder provides power. The other is a transfer cylinder which moves the enclosed air around from hot zones to cold and vice versa: it produces no power. The cylinders are cast monobloc and are mounted on a steel frame, with power being conveyed by a flat section con-rod fitted with a ball-bearing big end, to a horizontally mounted 7" diameter cast iron flywheel running in ball main bearings. This was innovative engineering practice in 1910, and these

tiny self-contained ball-races were instrumental in the success of the motor, as a very low level of friction was obtained, combined with durability.

Speed is controlled by a conventional gramophone governor driven by skew gears off the turntable spindle.

The bore/stroke ratio is oversquare with a bore of 3.2cm. and stroke of 3.1cm. giving a swept capacity of 25cc. or thereabouts. Peak revs are about 420 rpm, but this is way over the requirement to provide 78 rpm at the turntable, and the motor is normally operating well within its capability: it is silent and smooth at its governed speed.

Acoustically the gramophone was well equipped with a large 28" horn, a Maestrophone "Serenata" soundbox (very like an "Exhibition") and a ball-bearing mounted tone arm. These, together with the very good speed consistency of the motor, due to the heavy flywheel, gave sound reproduction very much in the top state of the art in 1910. (When the machine was sold under the Apollo name the soundbox was an Apollo Senior).



CAUSE OF MANY A FIRE?
The methyated spirit burner showing
the fine adjustment mechanism to trim the
flame into a stable condition

Fuel consumption
(methyated spirit) as

stated by the gramophone manufacturers in various advertisements, would have brought a glint to the eye of any Trades Descriptions Act officer who happened to be around in 1910. It was variously claimed to be: One pint for 12 hours running; $\frac{1}{2}$ litre for 45 hours running; $\frac{1}{2}$ pint for 45 hours running; and finally, 12 hours running on one container filling (which contained $\frac{1}{2}$ pint). In actual fact consumption is about 12 hours on one pint.

Research and Development of the Stirling Cycle Engine is still continued by big Company names; Ford Motor Co., General Motors, Philips of Eindhoven are some. It is a possible power source for use in satellites, where the required heat is produced easily by focussing the sun's rays, and where there is no woodwork.

SOUND REJOINDER

by Joe Pengelly

IT WAS INDEED KIND OF Peter Thomas to respond in the February "Hillandale News" to some of the points I raised in last October's issue and relating to the BBC's new cylinder and disc player. Can I now respond to query some of the conclusions he reaches and to reiterate some of the questions I raised and that remain unanswered.

1. Is it not to be regretted that the Beeb's new cylinder replay machine lacks the capability to play the remarkable Edison Kinetophone cylinders - so very much in the news now with the realisation of Edison's 1913 lip-sync sound films - and that they should be dismissed and discounted on the grounds that they are "not very portable"? Surely it is also unfortunate that the playing of 5" Concert cylinders should be similarly discounted by a mandrel dimension that so narrowly precludes their playing. This facility is particularly important because only with the Concert size cylinder does the speed of groove under a stylus achieve that of the flat disc, with a corresponding improvement in quality of replay and hence enabling a more direct assessment to be made of the sound quality emanating from the two different systems.

2. The employment of a modified Revox tangential replay mechanism "moved backwards and forwards" (sic) is a simplistic one - used by the way in two other replay systems but not mine - in that it allows no variable weighting of the cartridge, essential to achieve maximum quality of replay from both cylinder and disc. Quite rightly Pete claims for his tangential mechanism a "lightness of touch" and this is to be commended but so, too, are small variations of this "lightness of touch" in units of parts of a gramme as employed when playing LPs with arms such as the SME. In Pete's system only one playing weight is possible when, in fact, variation of playing weight is as important as varying the size of stylus if quality of replay is to be maximised. Further, the other defect in the tangential replay system and one that puts in question its whole concept, is that the angle of incidence of the stylus in relation to a cylinder is fixed and immovable when, in fact, varying that angle can often give a

better replay. This improvement stems from the stylus impinging on the groove in a new way and invariably one not tracked and worn by heavy acoustic replay over many years. Pete's reference to the Beeb's tangential system and to "a white wax never before found to be playable on any other machine" does not include mine - but more of this anon. What would be interesting to know from Pete is how does the Beeb's tangential disc machine cope with Pathé centre start allowing, of course, for the fact that it can't in any event accommodate the two largest Pathé sizes. I am sure Len Watts would like to know.

3. I am surprised that Pete found that reverse play of both cylinder and disc yielded no noticeable improvement when in fact this is a common practice used in high grade transcriptions and invariably gives a better result. Again, this is because of grooves being impinged on in a different way and so avoiding the damage done to a groove by acoustic replay with its attendant stiffness and, in the case of the disc, greater side pressure on one of the groove walls. I must confess that I am more than a little puzzled by Pete's non-sequitur conclusion that "if reverse or half-speed playback gives a noticeable improvement then something is usually wrong"? May not the correct conclusion be that logically something is right?

4. I take Pete's point that in a broadcasting organisation like the BBC time and money are of the essence. An example of this is the Beeb's transfer of its 78s to tape using an LP characteristic rather than the appropriate 78 one. In the case of artefacts like cylinders, however, surely the playing of a 2 minute wax cylinder at half speed to take just 4 minutes and thereby achieving a better quality of replay is not unreasonable. I am

concerned, too, not that the robust Beeb cylinder machine will come to any harm when used by untrained staff for which it has, according to Pete's brief been designed, but rather at the thought of a wax cylinder being well and truly seated on a mandrel by an untrained hand.

5. Pete's widening of the speed range of the Beeb's 78 player to 30-120 rpm still does not accommodate 16-2/3 rpm speech records or even those of that doyen of BBC voices Stuart Hibberd on the HMV speech series that revolve at 24 rpm. As to the Beeb's Engineering Department not knowing "of any disc recorded at a higher speed than 120 rpm!" I enclose a photostat of a cover from a 20" Pathé in my collection clearly showing a top revolve speed of 130 rpm in confirmation of my letter in your October 1988 edition. This is all rather strange seeing

Unfortunately the photocopy of the dark sepia Pathé cover does not reproduce here satisfactorily: however, the relevant message printed upon it reads as follows:

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Pathés disc of 20 in. should be heard at a speed of FROM 120 to 130 revolutions per minute with the "Pathé Concert" special diaphragm

that a machine to play 20" Pathés and at a speed up to and including 130 rpm was illustrated on the front cover of the August 1978 issue of "The Hillandale News" and, indeed, was also featured in a BBC television programme at this time. The Beeb's concern at having to call in a hovercraft for any Pathé disc requiring a faster speed than 120 rpm is, therefore,

negated. As to the £8,000 cost of the Beeb's new 78 player this must be put down to inflation since the only expenditure on the machine previously used by the Beeb some eleven years ago was 50p to purchase a 20" length of aluminium tubing to construct a suitable replay arm. After eleven years this equipment is still working well and did I not hear one of its transcriptions broadcast only last year?

6. I would certainly like to know how Pete is so sure that he is obtaining a "mirror" of the sound originally heard in the studio when it was recorded. With acoustic recordings there was no standard - everything was random with each of the early sound recording engineers making his cutting styli to his own subjective liking. If, therefore, Pete is getting the "correct" equalisation he claims then he must have a crystal ball. All he can hope to achieve is some sort of subjective equalisation that he personally finds acceptable, but the resulting sound isn't necessarily "the sound heard in the studio when it was recorded" that he claims.

As a fellow labourer with Pete in endeavouring to get the best possible signal out of recorded grooves can I suggest that we both transcribe onto tape the same cylinders and have the results adjudged by an independent expert. I am quite happy to limit the size of the cylinders to be transcribed to be those within the limited capability of the BBC machine, i.e. cylinders "just under 4" diameter". The Beeb to nominate and provide one such cylinder and myself the other. It could be fun.

COVER PICTURE

The Paillard Hot Air Gramophone pictured on our front cover was one of two belonging to the famous E.M.I. Collection. When the major part of the collection was auctioned at Christies, South Kensington, on 27th September 1980, this machine was knocked down at £1,900. One wonders what it would fetch today. Our thanks to Ruth Edge of E.M.I. Music Archives for the use of the photograph.

London Meetings

100 Years of the Talking Machine

by George Frow

ON THE PREMISE that history is always being unearthed, written about, or achieved in the Society, Chris Hamilton's programme on 100 Years of the Talking Machine was the Society's first involving Compact Discs. His progress really did not cover more than the first fifty years, but he gave his audience fascinating extracts from a CD of Berliners belonging to Peter Adamson. Some of these were quite extraordinary for their age, etched origin, and vulcanite composition.

Upon reaching the electrical years we heard comparisons between CD and the original 78s in Chris's own collection, and were invited to hear and comment on the doctoring that is now going on to get new generations to accept older sound, often to the exclusion of instruments and tonal range. He played both serious and lighter excerpts, sometimes the same recording through twice but with different treatment. All present enjoyed the dance tunes particularly. We went home feeling that the few cannot move the mountains of the Great Outside, but at least we can carry on enjoying our records as we like them. A happy and informative evening, and we all thank Chris for coming so far to entertain us.

Music While You Work

by Len Watts

THIS MONTH'S MEETING was a "free-for-all", a type of programme featured in the past but not recently. Members were asked to bring two records concerning a trade, occupation or profession.

The first item was The Judge's Song from Gilbert and Sullivan's "Trial by Jury", sung by Martin Green. This was followed by Gus Elen in "The Postman's Holiday", and then a song about a vanished trade, the ice-man. The days before universal refrigerators saw daily hawking in lorries and carts of huge lumps of ice: the song was "Any ice today, Lady?"

One or two rare discs were featured, including a Berliner of George Gaskin in "Take me back to London Town", and a four-inch Aircraft Products flexible record of Wilkie Bard singing "The Cleaner". A Velvet Face disc was heard; "The Wheeltapper's Song" by Ivor Foster. A very rare label, a Neophone, featured Archie Anderson singing Charles Dibdin's "The Tinker's Song". Among other items were: Largo al Factotum (Ruffo); The Caretaker (Bransby Williams); The Drum Major (Harry Dearth); The Cobbler's Song (Ian Wallace); The Gas Man Cometh (Flanders & Swann), and many more. Songs concerning occupations are legion, and hundreds must have been recorded. Certainly there was no lack of variety in this programme.

Regional News

from J.W. Astin

SUNDAY 19th FEBRUARY saw the first meeting of the Northern Gramophone & Phonograph Group (formerly called the North Yorkshire Branch) at Armley Museum, Leeds. This was the first of several meetings planned for the year, and an attempt to increase our membership. At this first meeting George Taylor, who has written many times in "The Hillandale News", spoke on "Aspects of record collecting". About 20 people turned up to listen and participate. George's interest in records began around 1977, when he was given an album of records, amongst them several single-sided examples of famous operatic artists. Over the years George's enquiring mind led him to find out more about these heavy, robust, shellac discs. We heard several singers and instrumentalists, including Nellie Melba, Eleanor Hudson-Jones, Alvena Yarrow, Adelina Patti, Eli Hudson, etc., played on an HMV exponential table model circa 1932. We discussed dating Victor records by using their matrix numbers (an article in "Hillandale" 116 [1980] refers).

Meetings will be held at 3-monthly intervals at Armley Museum, all on Sunday afternoons, and we welcome any fellow enthusiasts. The next meeting is on Sunday 18th June at 2.00 p.m.: a talk by JOHN POWELL of Leeds, on "Mechanical Music before the Phonograph."

25 Years Ago

This article, contributed by a youthful George Frow, first appeared in "Hillandale News" No.19, in June 1964

LITTLE MENLO

A CONNECTION WITH EDISON in London that may not be known to all members has disappeared this April. "Little Menlo" was the name of a large house in Beulah Hill, about a mile from the site of the Crystal Palace, and it was there that Edison's London agent, Col. Gouraud, was host to many eminent personages of the Victorian era in order to get them to record in his phonograph horn. It was, in short, the country's first recording studio.

Colonel Gouraud, who had been a cavalry officer on the Yankee side in the American Civil War, came to England and settled at the Beulah Hill house in 1877, the year of Edison's tin foil phonograph; some time afterwards becoming Edison's first agent in this country. As a tribute to his friend he named his house Little Menlo, the name being carved in a red terra-cotta arch over the carriage gates.

Gouraud and Edison corresponded regularly by Phonogram (cylinder) and in due course Little Menlo was visited by eminent Victorians from all walks of life; the Prince and Princess of Wales represented Royalty; there was Mr. Gladstone, even Kenneth Landfrey who recorded the bugle charge he blew for the Light Brigade at Balaclava. Florence

Nightingale recorded for Col. Gouraud, so did Browning and Lord Tennyson and H.M. Stanley, Lord Kelvin and Lord Rowton (who started the night's lodging scheme for London's poor). One of Col. Gouraud's assistants was George Bernard Shaw.

The nearby Crystal Palace concerts provided artists who were pleased to accept Col. Gouraud's hospitality afterwards and would gladly record for him for the novelty of hearing their own voices. In 1888 phonograph equipment was set up in the Press Gallery of the Crystal Palace to record what the Illustrated London News described as the "sublime strains, vocal and instrumental, of Israel in Egypt", probably the first example of outside recording.

In later years, like so many large houses, Little Menlo fell into decay and was used by Croydon Council for housing families bombed out during the War. When member Ray Phillips of Los Angeles and the writer visited it several years ago, it was thoroughly investigated for signs of phonograph activity of sixty or seventy years previously, but debris and broken glass covered everything, and nothing could be found. The writer passed the house during April, and with the Society in mind, stepped warily between heaps of blazing woodwork to enquire of the sole demolisher if it were possible to acquire the Little Menlo arch. He was told that Croydon Council had arranged "to send it to the place of the same name in America". This was some consolation, for if the Society had the arch, wherever would it be put? Not in my garden!

... and from the same early edition came this report from David Bayley ...

BRITISH MUSIC HALL SOCIETY GARDEN FETE

Saturday 9th May 1964 at Brinsworth House, Twickenham, will long be remembered by those who went along to enjoy themselves and to see how thirty retired members of Show Business are now being cared for. The afternoon was opened by Max Bygraves, who sang and introduced some of the other artistes present. A major attraction was a marquee crammed with displays of pictures, curios and other "Music Hall Miscellanea", organised by members of the British Music Hall society. Of great interest was Harry Tate's "motor car" (a large plywood cutout with many fittings) which has now been donated to the BMHS for preservation. Happily it is hinged in the middle, lessening the storage problem. There were also sideshows and two variety concerts inside Brinsworth House given by fifteen artistes including Trevor Morton, Renee Houston, and George Lacy. The sun shone and the day was a great success.

Letters

Sound Endorsement

Dear Ted,

I should like to lend support to Peter Thomas's claim in "Sound Investment" that when playing old records "if half-speed playback gives a noticeable improvement then something is usually wrong." Recently I decided to test the success of my equipment in tracking all those irregularities whizzing past the stylus. I recorded a series of records at half-speed onto one track of a tape recorder at 9.5 cm/s (3-3/4 ips). I then played the same records at full speed onto the other track at 19 cm/s (7½ ips), with due adjustment of the equalisation and level setting. The two versions were pretty well synchronised, so it was possible to play back the whole tape at the higher speed, and switch at will between the two versions. I found that despite some subtle improvements in the high treble clarity, in favour of the low-speed dubbing, the overall difference in sound quality between the two versions was generally less than the difference between the full-speed dubbing and playing the records "live". This result says something about the problems of tape-recording!

It really must be stressed, as Pete Thomas suggested, that much background noise, distortion and rumble is seriously exaggerated (or even caused) by inadequate mechanical and (to some extent) electronic deficiencies. These tend to introduce resonances, and frequently reduce the dynamic range; not just the simple signal-to-noise ratio, but also the internal dynamics of the recording, resulting in a generally "compressed" sound.

A short while ago I had the pleasure of hearing Pete Thomas's playing of 78rpm discs, and we were able to compare results. We found that the similarities of our results (by use of distinctly different means) outweighed the differences in sound quality. Nevertheless I would agree we are still getting only half the available sound quality and detail from these old recordings. May we now look forward to hearing more 78s on BBC historical programmes, played on this new

equipment, instead of the frequently compromised sound of commercial reissues, which can do a grave disservice to the recording engineers of old.

Yours sincerely, Peter Adamson
St. Andrews University, 19th February

Incorrect Record Labelling

Dear Mr. Cunningham,

Most of us have encountered records which are wrongly labelled. Usually the fault is merely that labels are attached to the reverse sides, and I have several LPs so affected, together with a German 7" 45 which is said, incorrectly, to have the same song by Marlene Dietrich on each side. However, a 7" Victory 78 takes first prize for utter confusion. Described on the label as Cat.No.91, with matrix nos. 466 (Victory Military Band: Raymond Overture Pt.2) and 651 (Leslie Sarony: "It Goes Like This") it actually contains matrices 467 (an abbreviated Tancredi Overture) and 652 (Leslie Sarony in "I lift up my finger"). In addition to this muddle, the labels have been affixed to the wrong sides so that Sarony is billed as the band and the Military Band as Sarony.

The pattern of error in this case is easily followed, but it would be interesting to know what happened when Brunswick (New Hall of Fame Popular Series) 80013 was prepared from the original Polydor matrices. Brunswick matrix no.80013A is etched on side A of the record and is shown on the label for that side, which announces that Robert Heger and the Orchestra of the Berlin State Opera will play the "Othello" Ballet Music by Verdi. What is graceful, though, is Part 2 of "L'Alborado del Gracioso" by Ravel conducted by Otto Klemperer, a fact established by the still visible original Polydor matrix number (297 bm). Side B contains what is announced, the Turkish March by Mozart. One wonders how many copies of this extraordinary record were pressed, and what the unsuspecting purchasers thought of this strange "Ballet Music" in a style so unlike Verdi. It is tempting to imagine that one day such "misprints" might become valuable collectors' items, as do philatelic blunders.

Yours sincerely, Alan Sheppard
Rodmell, nr.Lewes, 26th March

"The Gramophone Man"

Dear Mr. Cunningham,

For nine years I have been the proprietor of a shop in Wellington specialising in gramophones, phonographs and 78s, and have made many friends worldwide through the common interest in things gramophonic. However, times change, and so do market forces, and with the ending of the lease on my shop I feel that the time has come to reorganise my activities. Increasing interest rates coupled with rate rises and the burden of VAT mean that economic viability is borderline for many small businesses, and mine is no exception. Stock is also getting more difficult to purchase, with intense competition among collectors and dealers, and some remarkably silly prices being paid at auction, so the dice are loaded against the small shop with comparatively limited resources. It is also interesting to see how the market has shifted over the last few years, from being primarily for collectors to now being, often, one of pure nostalgia, where those with the buying power obtain a gramophone purely as a talking point for their home. Needless to say any established price structure tends to go by the board under such market forces as these, and true collectors are often not able to match the buying power of the general public at large.

I shall be closing the shop at the end of April, but I still hope to purchase machines and record collections, although the emphasis will switch to the repair of vintage radios and gramophones rather than the retail side. I am in the process of rebuilding the workshop, and should be operational by the autumn. All customers previously entered on my mailing list will be kept in touch with what is happening. I may even get round to a postal list of records and spares, but time will tell.

Can I, through the "Hillandale", thank all those who have supported the shop through thick and thin, and reassure them that I can still be contacted at the address below? Anyone wishing to keep in touch is welcome to write, and I will put them on any future mailing list.

Yours sincerely, Philip Knighton
2 Alexandra Road, Wellington, Somerset

Jack Daly Appeal

Dear Sir,

Can any member give me information about Jack Daly, the "Irish Personality Singer"? He was very popular in Australia during the 30s and 40s: his first release in this country seems to have been "A Little Dash of Dublin".

The radio station in the city where I grew up was forever playing his records, or so it seemed, and when I started collecting in the late forties this was one artist I looked out for. Over the years I have managed to obtain most of his Australian releases. During this period I have never heard or read one word about the man or his career. Can you enlighten me?

Yours faithfully, R.F. James
Alderley, Queensland, 16th April

BBC Records

Dear Sir,

I read with interest and amusement Paul Collenette's review of Robert Parker's record of UK Dance Bands in the October issue. Apart from asking Mr. Collenette to provide more of the same could I also make a plea on behalf of overseas members, to include an address to which we could apply for a copy of the record, and any subsequently reviewed? Now that most recordings are issued on almost indestructible CDs, postal delivery can be contemplated without the dangers that used to be attached to sending LPs through the post.

With all best wishes, Barry Goodwin
Richards Bay, S.Africa, 5th February

Robert Parker's records are published by BBC Enterprises, who have no sales outlets outside the U.K. Overseas readers should write to the BBC mail order agents: BBC World Shop, [redacted] London WC2B 4PH. True to Mr. Goodwin's observation, they will export cassettes and CDs but not fragile LPs. The cassettes cost £5.99 plus overseas p.& p. £1.20: the CDs cost £10.99 plus p&p £2.20. Payment can be made by Access, Visa, or American Express. [Ed.]

Record Reviews

GREAT CANTORS 1903-1930

by Alan Bilgora

ALTHOUGH MUSIC HAS PLAYED an important part in Jewish worship since the time of the Temple, Cantorial singing as we know it today really developed and flourished in Eastern Europe some 250 years ago. Early exponents who became masters set up schools, and young aspirants learned the complicated compositions by rote. Eventually the memorising of so many different musical settings of the Liturgy necessitated the need to extemporise, and this became an accepted part of the Cantor's art. Formalisation of musical form led eventually to many young student cantors attending a recognised musical conservatoire, as well as learning cantorial skills in a specialised centre.

The embryo cantor was sometimes a soloist in the Synagogue choir of an established Chazan (cantor). It was not unusual for that soloist to be the son of the Cantor, and to learn the basic Nusach (correct mode) from his father, thus setting a tradition in the family which, in some cases, has been carried through many generations. The Cantor's role is to lead the congregational service, and to offer up on the worshipper's behalf, the Tefilloth (prayers) to the Almighty. In many small towns and cities with close-knit Jewish communities, the music in the Synagogue was the only cultural stimulus available, and it was not unusual for claims to be made that the local cantor possessed a unique talent. Reputations were quickly made by word of mouth and resulted in 'calls' to officiate in larger congregations and in bigger cities. This created, for some Cantors, the cachet of a 'star' performer, and by the early 20th century it resulted in some of them undertaking concert tours and guest appearances in prestigious Synagogues in Europe and the United States.

By the end of the 19th century the emancipation of some Jewish communities allowed outside influences to make themselves felt, and cantors with sufficient vocal resources were lured onto the operatic stage. One can cite many such cases, and in a recent book compiled, written and published in Italy by Luciano di Cave, "Mille voce una Stella" (A thousand voices but one Star) can be found the names of many well known artists with Jewish origins who started their singing careers as Synagogue choristers or, indeed, as cantors.

The pogroms of the late 19th century in Central and Eastern Europe forced the emigration of many Jews, and the Holocaust finally destroyed the remaining small communities. Thus a source of young vocalists who may have had cantorial aspirations disappeared. This enforced dispersal, coupled with the opportunities offered by the variety theatre, radio, cinema, and opera,

has resulted in the number of first class Cantors being drastically reduced. The number of Cantors who can intone the Liturgy with Kavoneh (true dedication) and with a sound knowledge of Nusach are, compared with some 50 years ago, few indeed.

The artists represented on this disc fall within the category of those men whose piety did not allow them to be tempted by the legitimate theatre, and whose knowledge of the Nusach was gained from accepted masters and by diligent study. The disc is accompanied by a booklet which is really welcome, as it gives short biographies of the artists and, in the case of *Pinkasowicz*, a more detailed history written by the Cantor's daughter. The record's publishers, Symposium, have taken the trouble to list the original record numbers and dates, but surely it was an oversight not to identify the recording companies for whom the original discs were made. All the transfers have been well engineered, with a minimum, if any, of 'top cut' so that there is little diminution of overtones, and the ambience is rather like listening to the original shellac records. Care seems to have been taken in ensuring correct pitch where an understanding of voice identification must have played its part. It would have been easy to make arbitrary decisions about keys, without knowledge of what each singer's voice really sounded like. So many times in the past, transfers of some of these outstanding Cantors have been made at incorrect speeds, so that the singer's voices are made to appear thin, reedy and, in some cases, quite unnatural. As the original recordings were made over a period of nearly 30 years, covering both the acoustic and electric processes, the dynamic levels have seemingly been difficult to equalize. However, it is unlikely that such a disc is going to be played right through in one sitting; therefore such a slight shortcoming is hardly likely to impinge upon the listener's concentration or enjoyment.

A wise commentator once remarked that Cantors seem to fall into two categories; those who 'plead' and those who 'demand' that their supplications in intoning the liturgy be heard and, if possible, answered by God. It will not be difficult for the listener to identify the two varying styles of delivery on this disc.

In *Gershon Sirota* we can hear one of the greatest tenor voices of his generation. *Blanche Marchesi*, that highly respected teacher, compared his voice favourably to those of *Tamagno* and *Caruso*, praise indeed. The flexibility that *Sirota* demonstrates, with a really dramatic tone, is quite remarkable, and this includes the ability to trill (shake) on almost any note throughout his range, in full voice. *Berele Chagy*, too, shows great technical skill and dexterity in coloratura passages, together with a startling use of the falsetto (head voice). This facility is used extensively by most of the

great Cantors who recorded, to underline dramatic and lyrical contrasts in the liturgical texts.

Sawal Kwartin (whose grand-daughter, incidentally, is the well known American soprano, Evelyn Lear) was a great innovator and composer, as well as having a fine cantorial talent. His renditions are imbued with true Kavoneh (dedication). Like **Pinkasowicz**, who was also a true stylist, many of his original recordings are listed on the label as sung by a tenor. They both were, however, lyric baritones, using the upper vocal extension more readily, with a freer, more open tone than the classically trained baritone, in order to achieve affecting flights of coloratura which dramatise the prayers. **Joseph Rosenblatt** was famed as a 'boy chazan' and gained an enormous reputation throughout Europe. He developed a naturally-placed tenor voice which, although not technically perfect, enabled him to be enormously effective. He gave many concert tours in the United States, even appearing at a Sunday night concert at the Metropolitan Opera, New York. So impressed was **Cleofonte Campanini**, the Impresario, that he offered **Rosenblatt** a contract to appear in Halevy's "La Juive" at Chicago. However, the Cantor's religious scruples would not allow him to accept.

Both **David Roitman** and **Leib Glantz** display attractive lyric voices expertly used with fluent fioratura and head voice employed. **Joseph Shlisky**, too, held to those older traditions, with excellent coloratura embellishments and chiaroscuro effects. In **Mordecai Hershman** we have one of the most prolifically recorded Cantors of the 20th century. Possessing an attractive lyric tenor, many of his finest recordings were made in the electrical process, so that his fine tone (reminiscent at times of that distinguished American tenor, **Richard Crooks**) is well caught. In the recordings of **Manfred Lewendowsky** and **Hermann Fleischmann** we find examples of a different school of cantorial art. Much of the Synagogue music composed in the late 18th and 19th centuries in Germany and Austria, owes more to classical influences. The harmonic structure and melodic setting, although based on modal themes, seems more akin to Mendelssohn and Brahms than to the flowery and Eastern cadences exploited by their European colleagues. The Cantor seems to be in the same mould as the Lieder singer. Indeed, **Lewendowsky** was a respected concert singer and operatic artist and left recordings of all facets of his skills.

Symposium have promised more transfers of this genre. If the next selections maintain this standard then all who sample the results should be entertained by a means of vocal expression which, even to the uninitiated, should have a real fascination.

GREAT CANTORS Vol.1. Compact Disc 1044,
 SYMPOSIUM RECORDS, [redacted] East
 Barnet, Herts. EN4 8LZ. £10.00, post & packing free in
 UK; Europe £1.50 extra; elsewhere by arrangement.

SIDNEY BECHET

by Arthur Badrock

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS Robert Parker has succeeded in widening the traditionally narrow market for reissue jazz LPs and has attracted a younger audience who find that his digitally enhanced stereo system makes the early recordings alive and acceptable to their ears. Unlike the readers of this magazine such collectors demand a certain technical brilliance from the records they purchase and for them the sound quality is more important than a sense of history. I am sure this LP will enjoy good sales and be welcomed by the growing band of specialist "Parker" collectors. In the case of the 16 tracks on this LP clean copies of the originals are not uncommon and after 40 years of listening to them I prefer the true sound of the 78s without Mr. Parker's enhancement, but then this LP is not aimed at the minority in my position and the totally random selection of titles is unlikely to attract the established Bechet collector. Full discographical details and an analysis of each track are printed on the inner sleeve, and the outer sleeve has a potted biography by John Chilton, though I would question the need to include the details of Bechet's law breaking in England and France.

As a Bechet 'sampler' for the general collector the LP contains some good examples of his intensely passionate playing. Among my personal favourites is "Shag", one of those gems which occurred throughout the history of jazz; an uninhibited romp cut after the main business of the session had been completed; no pressure, no nerves, just a relaxed blow among friends. For **Humphrey Lyttelton** it produced "Bad Penny Blues" and for Bechet's Savoy Band it resulted in "Shag".

Seven of the tracks feature Bechet with members of the Noble Sissle Orchestra, not a particularly happy period professionally for Bechet but in the lean 30s it was better than tailoring. In these small group recordings Bechet demonstrates why he was one of the great individual voices in jazz, improvising melodic solos full of emotion. In 1919 **Ernest Ansermet** had listened to him in London and described him as "an artist of genius", "an extraordinary clarinet virtuoso . . . the first of his race to have composed perfectly formed blues on the clarinet". If you are unfamiliar with his work listen to "Characteristic Blues" and hear the magic that so entranced that perceptive conductor 70 years ago.

SIDNEY BECHET 1924-1938. BBC ENTERPRISES LP
 REB 700; Cassette ZCF 700; Compact Disc
 BBC.CD.700. Okey Doke; Early every morn; Shag; Polka
 Dot Rag; Viper Mad; Blackstick; Sweet Patootie; I've
 found a new Baby; Characteristic Blues; Mandy make up
 your mind; Maple Leaf Rag; Ja-da; Really the Blues; When
 you and I were young, Maggie; Weary Blues; When the sun
 sets down South.

Book Reviews

EDISON INTERVIEWS

by Steven I. Ramm

Edison, Musicians, and the Phonograph; A Historical Guide. (1987) Edited by John Harvith and Susan Edwards Harvith. Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, USA. 456 pages; US \$49.95

CONSIDERING THAT HE INVENTED the phonograph in 1877 and approved all selections issued by his company, was Thomas A. Edison the world's first Artists & Repertoire man? This idea forms the beginning of this new book, which consists of 42 edited interviews with recording artists and others involved in the recording process. Mr. Harvith is a music critic and teacher in Michigan; his wife is curator of exhibitions at Oberlin College; she catalogued Edison recordings at the Henry Ford Museum. Together they mounted an exhibit at the University of Michigan for the Phonograph Centenary in 1977. Most of the interviews take place in Ann Arbor, Michigan; it appears they interviewed every artist who came through town, beginning in 1972. This certainly limits the scope of the interviews.

While Edison is listed prominently in the title, less than 10% of the book relates to him or his work. There is a 19pp introduction on the history of recorded sound which includes 46 footnotes. The authors explain that, while Edison spent three million dollars perfecting his Diamond Disc record so that it would reproduce the human voice as perfectly as possible, he was unwilling to reward artists financially, and signed very few "exclusive" artists. He also refused to sign a major symphony orchestra.

The first interview is with Ernest L. Stevens, Edison artist and Edison's personal music director. He tells a funny story of how Edison encouraged local Newark people to come in and record: he was looking for hidden talent, such as a workman in a cement plant. I had the pleasure of interviewing Mr. Stevens (now deceased) in 1979; he had some wonderful Edison stories not recounted here. The interview with Tom's youngest son, Theodore Edison, who was heavily involved in the later electrical recording process, is only four pages long, and should have been longer. The interviews with the remaining Edison artists (Anna Case, 2 pages; Irving Kaufman, 4 pages; Don Voorhees, 4 pages; and Samuel Gardner) are much too brief. There are, however, some interesting facts. Gardner, a violinist, says Edison didn't like vibrato playing which made "shaky grooves"; he wanted dead sound. Gardner recorded some of these, but refused to have his name on the label. The rest of the book concentrates on classical artists and technicians in the Classical Music field, except for six pages on Benny Goodman. The authors

seem prejudiced against popular music. The longest interview is with the Guarneri Quartet: it runs to 38 pages and unbalances the book. They even interview Miha Pogacnik, a violinist who refuses to make commercial records. No wonder we never heard of him! Some other weaknesses. After each interview there are bibliographies. Some are relevant, others not. The New Grove Dictionary of Music is often given, even for Benny Goodman. Throughout the interviews the authors provide record issue numbers. A more useful and less distracting method would be year of issue, since issue numbers change, and this is "a historical guide". Also, classical musical terms, such as "rubato" are used often but never explained.

A book comparing recorded performances to live ones is an excellent idea. The documenting of interviews with pioneer recording artists and technicians is useful to future researchers. It is a shame that this book is so unbalanced and does not produce what it intends.

NORWEGIAN ODEON

by George Frow

Discography: Norwegian Odeon (No.1) 1938-1958 by Tom Valle and Arild Bratteland. Obtainable from Tom Valle, [redacted] Oslo 10, Norway. Price £15.00. Sterling cheques accepted.

DUE TO ITS LARGE AREA and widespread population, Scandinavia's record industry relied more on imported material than, say, a central country like Germany, where large groups of population fostered music of all sorts. Nevertheless there is no shortage of local talents in this compilation of the Norwegian Odeon catalogue from 1938 to 1958, with the help of monthly catalogues, the engineer's recording ledger, and even that of one of the performers, the dance-band leader Joe Daniels. Coupled with all this it is neatly presented, finished on single-sided A4 paper, and quite substantial.

Followers of dance music and swing bands will find it a helpful listing, having not only names familiar on the UK Parlophone label, but also Swedish, Norwegian, and German dance and cabaret items, and the ubiquitous Americans, Shaw, Goodman, James, etc. etc. It is surprising that even some British domestic items with no obvious interest beyond Dover should have been issued in Norway. Straight from Germany, too, are Herbert Ernst Groh, Margarete Slezak, and Emmy Bettendorf (stalwarts on Parlophone here in their time) and German symphonic orchestras as well as, of course, Tauber. Almost all of these records show dates and origins. A great deal of work has been built into this practical reference for the collector of foreign recordings of those days.

Theodore Birnbaum

by Peter Martland

ERNIE BAYLY'S LETTER in December brought to our attention Theodore Birnbaum, one of the key yet enigmatic figures in the early formation and subsequent development of The Gramophone Company Ltd. Birnbaum was associated with the Company right from its beginning in 1898, and was the leading figure in its development into an international trading organisation. As Ernie pointed out in his letter, Birnbaum became Managing Director of the Company after William Barry Owen left in 1905, steering the Company through the building of the Hayes factory, and the severe trade depression of 1907-1908.

I had the opportunity of discussing with Ernie, Birnbaum's origins; concluding that he was in fact not American but of German extraction. However, subsequent enquiry reveals that in fact we were both wrong, as Birnbaum was born in Islington, London, on the 27th February 1865. He was from a commercial background, his father was a merchant who had settled in London, having emigrated from Poland earlier in the century. Theodore had a cultured educated upbringing, and entered business life as an import export merchant with his brother Rudolph.

Evidence suggests that he was dealing in talking machine goods prior to his

association with William Barry Owen in the spring of 1898. Indeed it would appear that he maintained a business life outside of his Gramophone Company activities. On his departure from the Board of the Gramophone Co. in 1910 he returned full time to the import export business.

Ernie is quite right to say that "Theodore Birnbaum has never satisfactorily been written up." My own researches have so far revealed him as a man whose importance in the crucial phase of market formation of the talking machine industry has been seriously understated. His business and family connections both resolve and at the same time create problems in our understanding how and why The Gramophone Co. Ltd. became the organisation it did. I hope that in due course I will be able to satisfactorily resolve at least some of these issues.

My own interest in Birnbaum was heightened when some years back I met and became friends with his son, Sir Anthony Burney OBE. His knowledge of his father's business life was of necessity limited because Theodore Birnbaum died when Sir Anthony was still a boy. Needless to say none of his business papers have survived. Sadly Sir Anthony died early in the New Year in his eightieth year, a loss for me of a very dear friend. Also, with his going we lose yet a further link with the pioneers of sound recording.

CITY OF LONDON PHONOGRAPH AND GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY BRANCH SECRETARIES

EAST FIFE

E.J. Goodall, [REDACTED]

SEVERN VALE

Lawrie Wilson, [REDACTED]

MIDLANDS

G. Burton, [REDACTED]

NEWCASTLE

(Clockwork Music Group)

P. Bailey, [REDACTED]

YORKSHIRE

(The Northern Gramophone & Phonograph Group)

J.W. Astin, [REDACTED]

VICTORIA,
AUSTRALIA

C. Gracie, [REDACTED]

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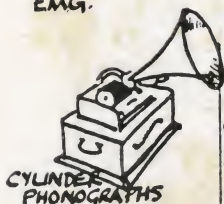
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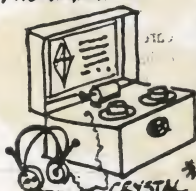
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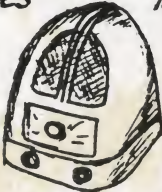
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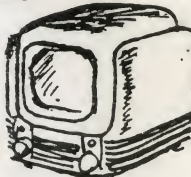
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